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Around the World

Our Eroding Ramparts

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When the United States Supreme Court by a 5 to 4 decision in 1958 caused the then State Department Passport Security Regulations to fall, President Eisenhower recommended that Passport Security legislation was urgently needed. He said, "Each day and week that passes without it exposes us to great danger."

Five years have passed. The need for this legislation has obviously increased and there is still no such legislation. Hundreds of Soviet operatives certainly, and more likely thousands, are using the credentials of United States passports, implementing the grand design of Soviet conquest around the world. Despite the grave concern openly expressed by top people in our government, a handful of lower echelon persons have thwarted efforts to plug this security hole.

Frances Knight, the experienced director of the Passport Office of the United States State Department, a gracious lady of the tradition of Ruth Shipley who held that office before her for decades, has repeatedly tried to prevent Communist agents from using American passports to carry on their appointed tasks abroad.

Last year she testified that Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy has pointed out that "Communist espionage in this country is much more active now than it ever has been" and that J. Edgar Hoover, director of the F.B.I., has said on March 19, 1962, "The Communist threat from without must not blind us to the Communist threat from within. The latter is reaching into the very heart of America through its espionage agents and a cunning, defiant, and lawless Communist party which is fanatically dedicated to the Marxist cause of world enslavement and destruction of the foundations of our Republic."

Yet her passport office by direction had to issue passports to 547 persons she knew to be Communists. These Communists not only carry out courier and intelligence assignments and collect blackmail information about government officials, but blacken the reputation of the United States abroad by acts and utterances.

Miss Knight, in testifying before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee has pointed out how she is now forced, by State Department regulations, to blot out of her mind, when deciding who is a Communist, all F.B.I. or security information which she constitutes 9 per cent of her evidence.

She said:

"I, as the issuing officer, am supposed to tailor my 'reason to believe that the applicant is a member of a Communist organization' to data which can be made public regardless of how much classified information is produced by the FBI or other agencies of government to the effect that the individual is a dangerous Communist. If the proof cannot be used in open hearings, with the right to cross-examine witnesses, I have been instructed to disregard it. In other words, I am expected to

read the file, dismiss the classified information and base my decision on what can be best described as generalized public information. I maintain that no one can do this in good conscience and this places me in a difficult position between the law and the government's expert 'legal advisers' who interpret the law. It is a fact that under the present regulations, the more treacherous and vicious and destructive the individual may be, the less likely it is that he will be denied a passport."

Then she said: "The public has been led to believe that, at long last, there are regulations in effect which will prevent the use of the U.S. passport for the benefit or promotion of world communism. There appears to be no realization that the few functionaries who may get caught in this very ineffective net are relatively unimportant."

Congress would certainly grant legislation but it has been told that the administration does not need it — that the existing regulations are adequate. The evidence is mountainous that the opposite is true.

When the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee looked into this matter it discovered that the decision that enables Communists to move at will with our credentials, was made not by the President, J. Edgar Hoover, Miss Knight, the security administrator, or any of the responsible leaders of government, but by a handful of lower echelon bureaucrats. The underlying letter that set the crippling policy was drafted by a second

tier lawyer who had worked in the State Department only one year. He acknowledged he had come into State after working under Walt W. Rostow when that important policy planner headed up a covert CIA operation at the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The testimony of the subcommittee shows clearly that a handful of lower officials for State and Justice got together in November 1961 and made the damaging decision and did not even see fit to consult the heads of their departments before promulgating the resulting policy.

Reading the record will reveal that Sen. Thomas J. Dodd has pointed out that the State Department, in allowing passports to Communists, is adopting standards in passport security that are "substantially those advanced by Mr. John Abt in behalf of the Communist party, although in some respects they seem to go even farther in the party's favor than even Mr. Abt has gone."

Fantastic you say. Not however, if Mr. Rostow's underlying theme that "communism is mellowing" is the basis of our policy in all departments. And it should be obvious when you observe the missiles in Cuba, the offensives of the Viet Cong and the Pathet Lao and scores of other manifestations of implacable Soviet aggression that, rather than mellowing, it is becoming more voracious as it moves in for the kill. It is our inner ramparts that are mellowing and eroding.

This column also appeared in the Indianapolis, Indiana, NEWS, 23 March 1963.